

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Destruction of Waterfowl by Oil.—Along the Atlantic coast of Canada large quantities of floating oil, most of it present as a result of war activities, caused the destruction in three local areas of some thousands of seabirds during the latter part of the winter of 1941–42. The areas in which such destruction chiefly occurred were the Grand Manan Archipelago, on the southwest coast of New Brunswick; part of the coast of Shelburne County, in extreme southwestern Nova Scotia; and a part of the coast of Halifax County, Nova Scotia.

The birds that were thus destroyed included several thousands of Eiders, of Brunnich's Murres, and of Dovekies; hundreds or a few thousands of Mergansers, of Old-squaws, of Golden-eyes, of Black Guillemots, and of Razor-billed Auks; and at least a few American Scoters, White-winged Scoters, Scaups, Herring Gulls, and Great Black-backed Gulls. Although many Black Ducks winter in areas affected, this species appears to have suffered very little from the oil, for only one Black Duck certainly identified was reported as having been found dead as a result of contact with it.

Whether the Eiders that died as a result of these oil pollutions were *Somateria mollissima borealis* or *S. m. dresseri* is not known. It is of interest in this connection, however, that along the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where *dresseri* is the common breeding race, reports from officers of the Canadian Department of Mines and Resources indicate that in the summer of 1942 there was no apparent diminution of the population of nesting Eiders and these birds enjoyed a very successful season of reproduction.—HARRISON F. LEWIS.

Resolution.—"In times of stress, such as the present, there is danger that public resources of permanent value may be exploited unduly to furnish food and other materials.

Be it resolved, therefore, that the American Society of Mammalogists at its 24th annual meeting, April 3, 1942, goes on record as opposing the use of any such materials from National Parks, National Monuments, or National and State Wildlife Refuges, unless it be demonstrated that such materials cannot be obtained elsewhere." (*Jour. Mammalogy*, 23: 227, 1942.)

Drought

Now that the intense drought of recent years has been broken, it is easy to look upon it as no more than an interlude, no matter how unpleasant. The rains have come, the drought is broken, life can go on again after the same old pattern. But can it? Tons of topsoil, the slow reserve of centuries, are gone, blown away. It can be built again, but no man now living will sift it through his fingers. Still, the land is green again—Not the same land, and not the same green. Here are figures, as of the summer of 1941: "Square-foot samples of surface soil were collected from 49 drought-damaged ranges and prairies in Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado, and viable seeds germinated. Seedlings grew at the average rate of 67 per sample. Forty species of forbs occurred, of which more than 96 per cent were annual weeds. . . . There were 26 species of grass seedlings of which 20 per cent were ruderals. . . . Numbers and kinds of seedling grasses were determined in June in each of 25 square-foot areas in each range or prairie. Extensive soil sampling and study of numerous rainfall records showed that an almost continuous supply of moisture had been available to promote germination and establishment of seedlings. . . . Of 550 square feet of soil on which seedling grasses were counted, 37 per cent supported none. Seedling grasses were especially rare in drought-stricken and dust-covered ranges of western Kansas. . . . Viable seeds of native perennial forage grasses, with rare exception, were present in such small numbers (26 per square foot) as to be of limited value, when seedling hazards are considered, in restoration of the vegetation. Average distribution of perennial grass seedlings on

the ranges and prairies was 4.3 per square foot; in mixed prairie alone, 2.4 per unit area. Even if all seedlings (exclusive of the stoloniferous buffalo grass) had survived and made a maximum growth in mixed prairie, they would have increased the cover less than 2 per cent." (J. E. Weaver and I. M. Mueller, "Role of seedlings in recovery of midwestern ranges from drought," *Ecology*, 23, 1942: 275-294.

The immediate effects of the drought were spectacularly severe; the after-effects may be less plain to the uninitiated but they may well be equally severe. They will persist over a vastly longer period of years.—F.N.H.

Reforestation Strip-mines

"The first year of operation of Indiana's law requiring the reforestation of areas from which coal has been removed by the stripping or open-cut method has resulted in the planting of approximately two million trees on 1,617 acres of such land. . . . Under provisions of the 1941 law, each company mining coal in Indiana by stripping off the soil overlaying the coal is required to reforest an area equal to that stripped. In addition the company must reforest an additional area equal to one per cent of the acreage stripped [in the past], a provision which eventually will complete the reforestation of older stripped sections." (*Outdoor Indiana*, 9, No. 6, 1942: 7.)

"Control" of the Golden Eagle in Texas

From Texas come officially sponsored news stories advocating control of Golden Eagles by use of the shotgun from airplanes. An official kill of 1,338 eagles since 1930 is reported.

The control of eagles at particular spots where new plantings of antelope have been made, or where some remnant of mountain sheep is slipping, might well be a practical necessity for a temporary period. To urge the flying public to pursue and shoot eagles is quite another matter, and might readily extirpate the species from the western ranges. Texas has been doing admirable work in wildlife conservation, but this eagle campaign seems quite out of harmony with the solid, tolerant common sense characteristic of other undertakings of the Texas Commission.—Aldo Leopold.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Frederick N. Hamerstrom, Jr., Chairman